

Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-12

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SOFIA PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: EFIS, BU

SUBJECT: SEIZURE OF BULGARIAN FISHING VESSEL ARGONAUT

1. BULGARIAN FISHING VESSEL ARGONAUT SEIZED THIS MORNING BY COAST GUARD CUTTER VIGOROUS FOR ILLEGAL TAKING OF LOBSTER ON US CONTINENTAL SHELF. SEIZURE TOOK PLACE 154 MILES FROM NANTUCKET ISLAND. SEIZED VESSEL ETA IN BOSTON 0900 HOURS TOMORROW, AT WHICH TIME WE EXPECT CIVIL AND CRIMINAL CHARGES TO BE FILED AGAINST VESSEL AND CAPTAIN RESPECTIVELY. OVER 500 LBS. OF LOBSTER IN TWO HOLDS WERE FOUND AND STERN TRAWL WAS RIGGED FOR BOTTOM FISHING (U.S. LAW STATES THAT LOBSTER MUST BE THROWN BACK EVEN IF ACCIDENTLY CAUGHT, AND EVEN IF DEAD.)

2. BOTH GOB AND SEIZED VESSEL HAVE BEEN PREVIOUSLY WARNED. ON DECEMBER 5, 1974 THE BULGARIAN EMBASSY WAS SENT A DIP-LOMATIC NOTE WARNING THAT ENFORCEMENT OF LAW WOULD BE INCREASED. IN ADDITION, ROUTINE WARNINGS GIVEN ARGONAUT

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BY COAST GUARD AND NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE OF

COMMERCE DEPT. SINCE STEPPED UP ENFORCEMENT THIS YEAR,
THREE SHIP SEIZURES FOR SIMILAR OFFENSES HAVE TAKEN
PLACE; TWO ITALIAN SHIPS AND ONE POLISH. (FYI: PAST
EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS BULGARIAN FINE OF NOT MORE THAN
\$100,000)

3. IN 1974 A BULGARIAN VESSEL WAS SEIZED FISHING WITHIN
12-MILE LIMIT, A DIFFERENT PROVISION OF THE LAW. THE
CAPTAIN PLEADED GUILTY, FINED \$125,000 AND RELEASED. KISSINGER

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